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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: BUSH'S TRIP TO ASIA

1. Summary: Major Chinese-language Taipei dailies focused their coverage November 15 on the upcoming 3-in-1 elections, local scandals, and a Council of Agriculture announcement Monday that H7N3, a highly pathogenic strain of avian flu, was found in southern Taiwan. Both the centrist "China Times" and pro-unification "United Daily News" reported on a seminar on China-U.S. relations, which kicked off in Beijing Monday. Both papers agree the main focus of the seminar is Taiwan. Local newspapers gave very limited coverage to the upcoming APEC meeting in Pusan and President George W. Bush's trip to Asia. "China Times" is the only newspaper that devoted significant space for straight news stories on Bush's visits to Japan and China.

2. Editorials in two limited-circulation, English-language newspapers discussed Bush's Asia trip. The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" editorial condemned the expansion of Chinese hegemony and its authoritarian structure, urging the United States to work with other democratic countries to pressure Beijing into making substantial progress in its democratic development. The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" editorial, however, said Taiwan is not a hot issue on Bush's agenda this time because, thanks to U.S. intervention and Beijing's Anti-Secession Law, the momentum in Taiwan toward independence has stalled. End summary.

A) "Excessive Profits Erode Security"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] commented in an editorial (11/15):

"US President George W. Bush will visit Japan, South Korea, China and Mongolia on his latest trip to Asia. The Bush administration's China policy has increasingly been influenced by experts who favor economic engagement in terms of huge market and business opportunities, while paying less attention to the constant expansion of Chinese hegemony and its authoritarian structure, which oppresses democratic forces. .

"If the US regards Beijing as responsible, on what grounds can it condemn countries such as North Korea and Iran? The threat these nations pose to international security and democracy is limited compared with that posed by a nuclear power such as China. .

"The US has much to lose if Bush continues to rely on those who take an economic view and champion profit at the expense of international security in the construction of his administration's foreign policy. China stands out in that it is so clearly poised, both by virtue of its size and its nuclear arsenal, to threaten regional and international peace. If it were not for Beijing's support, would a government like North Korea's dare to act in such a high-handed manner? ."

B) "Taiwan Not on Bush Agenda"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] wrote in an editorial (11/15):

". This will be Bush's third official visit to China. Taipei is always apprehensive whenever a top U.S. official, especially the president, goes there. But this time Taiwan has receded from a hot issue to a background issue of U.S.-China relations because the momentum in Taiwan towards independence has stalled, thanks to U.S. intervention and Beijing's new tactics.

"There is a general agreement in Washington that since Beijing passed an anti-secession law in March, condoning military force against Taiwan independence, there has been a reduction in cross-strait hostility. U.S. constraints on Taipei pursuing pro-independence initiatives that risk conflict with China will likely remain strong through to the end of President Chen Shui-bian's term of office in 2008. This relaxed status quo is cherished by all except the Chen administration, which seeks to break it."

